

earn enough for us by jenson40

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Summary: She thought about their conversation everyday. The one where he called her out about being a suburban girl going from her parents' home to running her own. Marrying a jock... he had almost been right. She just hadn't married a jock. She married a town loner.

1. Chapter 1

AN: Heyo! So, I've never written for stranger things... I'm jenson40, and I normally write for Gilmore Girls, but I have no motivation for that at the moment. I do however have motivation to write this! I've had this idea basically since Nancy and Jonathan had that conversation in season one about like you know being carbon copies of everyone else like them and crap... so yeah... I hope y'all enjoy. If you do, I would love a comment to see if I should continue. Or if you have any constructive criticism, or whatever. I'll be looking forward to hearing from you guys. Have a great Sunday!

October 1990

It wasn't supposed to be like this. She wasn't supposed to be pulled into suburbia like the women before her. She was supposed to get a job, travel, live in a dingy apartment in New York with Jonathan. She wasn't supposed to be buying a house in an up and coming neighborhood in a suburb that was ten miles (but a 40-minute drive) from Indianapolis. She wasn't supposed to be pregnant! But she was. She was pregnant, and buying a house in Carmel, and engaged, and getting welcome casseroles from her new neighbors, and living the life she had always sworn off.

She wondered if this wouldn't have happened if only she had gone with Jonathan to New York for the summer. Or maybe she would have just gotten pregnant there instead of ridiculously hot and humid Indiana. Or maybe if she'd gotten pregnant there, Jonathan would have let them get an apartment in the city. Served her right for keeping them in-state that summer. Served her right for thinking that she could actually break away from the cycle.

She probably wouldn't have been as frustrated with the situation if she hadn't just graduated from college. She was barely 22, and her life was planned out for her in a way that she had never wanted it to be. But, she loved Jonathan, and she was happy to be engaged to him. If only the circumstances were different. She didn't want them to get married because she was "in the family way." No, she wanted them to have had time to live in the city. Stupidly in love, and not

having a care in the world. Now, she would play the part of doting mother, living in the stupid suburban neighborhood of Village Farms, and taking care of the stupid house at the end of the cul-de-sac.

That *fucking* cul-de-sac. Of all the places their house could have been. She knew it was God playing some ironic trick on her. She was going to be living out her parents' life... or so she thought until she saw that look Jonathan gave her as he brought in another box. He actually loved her, and she actually loved him. That was more than either of their parents could say for themselves. But just because she loved the man she was going to marry didn't mean that she was content to live in a cul-de-sac.

Nancy placed her hand on her stomach, looking around at their new home. This had all come upon them so suddenly. The house, the baby, the new town, everything. Two months ago, Jonathan proposed. She knew why. When they told her parents, her mother had gone on and on about how a child should have two parents and a stable home. Barely even three days later, he was at her door on his knee begging for her to say yes. She did. Then that following week, he had mentioned off-hand that there was a company in Indy that had been taking a look at his portfolios. And the week after that they had contacted a realtor about finding a house in close proximity to the city. It was all a whirlwind that couldn't seem to end.

A whirlwind that no one was letting her help with. She was getting tired of hearing people tell her to take it easy, not to strain herself, go sit down. That was exhausting in itself. She was close to pulling at her hair and stomping on the ground like a little kid with boredom and annoyance. She grabbed the next person to come through the door, thankfully it was El, and pulled her up the stairs towards what had been designated as the baby's room. Nancy slammed the door shut behind them, closing themselves in the room filled with boxes.

"If I don't do something soon, I'm gonna scream," Nancy told her future sister-in-law when she noticed the wide-eyed concerned look she was being given. El nodded her head, plopping onto the white carpet next to an unopened box. Nancy was surprised that the 19-year-old girl didn't protest or return to the others to tattle on her. But she was pleased, so she sat adjacent to the girl, tearing at the taped edges on the box.

El stared curiously into the box, pulling out a few old dresses that had been Nancy's when she was a baby. "Pretty," she noted, brown eyes alight.

Nancy nodded, "My mom thinks it's going to be a girl." She smiled for the first time since they had arrived in Carmel, not feeling a sense of dread when she placed her hand over her ever-growing stomach. When the normally quiet girl didn't respond, Nancy took that as a moment to begin sifting through the other things in the box.

She began making piles, noting that El was following her system strategically. Still not saying a word. The silence was nice. Everyone seemed to be fretting over her more often than not. Her mother had been hovering while she still stayed with them, and when she finally got her free time to go to the Byers/Hopper household, Joyce and Hopper were quick to keep her seated comfortably on the couch. Even Jonathan was giving her ideas on how to keep herself occupied yet off her feet. It was overwhelming, and this move wasn't giving her much to do.

"I can already tell this place is gonna suck," Nancy finally broke the silence. El's head snapped upwards from the drawer she was organizing, her eyes full of questioning. "Ok, well, maybe not this place exactly... this wasn't supposed to be my life." The curly haired girl had officially abandoned the task she had been given and was now sitting cross-legged in front of her boyfriend's sister. "I-I love Jonathan, and I love my baby, but... I just can't help thinking that there was supposed to be more to my life than going from my parents' home to running my own. I probably sound selfish to you; don't I? I've got such a nice cushy life, loving fiancé, baby on the way, nice house, and then there's your shitty life, and I'm complaining that I've got the American dream."

After her rant, the room fell back into silence. El didn't know how to respond to that, and Nancy felt like she couldn't get her words across correctly. She couldn't explain her feelings to herself either, and she didn't want to think about trying to explain them to Jonathan. He was excited about his job in the city. It may not have been New York City, but it was a city, and it was a little bit more than an hour away from Hawkins. That in its own right was more than he had ever thought possible for himself.

"Steve and Dustin just got back with pizza," the man in question stuck his head through the door, smiling at the sight of the two women. Nancy still couldn't believe how her ex-boyfriend had been able to not only stay on friendly terms with her but with her future husband as well. Seeing Steve get along with Jonathan, sharing a beer over moving boxes blew her mind.

Nancy held her arms up, struggling to gain her footing. Jonathan came to her rescue, placing his hand on her lower back once she finally stood. His eyes searched her face, silently asking if she was ok. It took all of Nancy's willpower not to roll her own eyes in response. She nodded softly, allowing him to herd her out of the room and graciously taking his help down the stairs. She didn't like when they entered kitchen, and nearly every person offered her a chair to which she declined every one of them. Not like they had any chairs or the space for them.

Being fresh out of college, the new homeowners had scrounged up just enough money for their own mattress and bedframe. The baby's things and sparse furniture they acquired were all hand-me-downs from her parents' storage or Hopper's leftovers from the cabin. They had been able to move all the furniture in two trucks, and the boxes in the back of Jonathan's car and the Wheeler station wagon.

The pizza was distributed, and groups began forming on the ground to eat. Nancy leaned against Jonathan, finally giving into her swollen ankles and lower back pain to seat herself on the hardwood floor (it did nothing to ease the pain). Around them a circle was formed, consisting of the D&D party and Steve. The adults moved to the living room, their mothers weepy eyed as they realized their eldest children were moving on and having a life of their own.

The only noise that could be heard was the chatter from the parents and the chewing of pizza. Everything was changing. The most obvious being the fact that Nancy and Jonathan were having a baby. That fact alone signaled to the others that they weren't kids anymore. They weren't playing Dungeons and Dragons in basements, hunting monsters, taking down government conspiracies. They were going to college, getting jobs, moving to other towns, having kids of their own. This world was more upside down than the separate universe.

Obviously, this day was taking its toll on the younger group. Steve, long since claimed to have gotten over it and even extended an olive branch to the couple, was caught (by Dustin) staring longingly at Nancy and her bump. He waved it off, but the college student knew (that was probably the thing he was now struggling with the most). Mike and El and Will struggled to come to terms with their siblings not being there with them. Not everything revolved around Hawkins. Lucas and Max realized that their actions came with consequences. That sometimes life came full circle.

Life coming full circle...

That probably scared all of them more than any Demogorgan or Mind Flayer could.

And it was becoming Nancy and Jonathan's reality.

2. Chapter 2

AN: Hey! I am back, surprisingly. Haha! Ok, so this chapter, I thought it seemed a bit OOC and cheesy, but I don't know if you guys will think so too. Anyway, I hope you enjoy, if you do please leave a review or something cause those really lift my spirits and inspire me. Again, enjoy!

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

They were the first to retreat to bed. Steve had made a joke about christening the house, but the glint of sorrow in his eyes went unnoticed. The extra rooms had been offered up to anyone else willing to stay, mostly because they weren't sure if they were ready to inhabit the house on their own. Before a response was given, the owners of the house ascended the stairs to their new room.

They could hear the front door open and close, and they *knew* who had stayed and who had left.

Nancy lowered herself onto the mattress, waving her hand dismissively when Jonathan rushed to her side. She could do simple things, such as getting into bed, on her own.

"Is this ok?" Jonathan asked when they were both situated. Nancy nodded, sighing loudly. "I mean, here. The house, Carmel... g-getting married."

She turned to face him, a perplexed look gracing her features. "What, what makes you ask that?" she deflected. She felt his chest rise and fall as he took a deep breath.

"I-I heard you. And El. When you said that this wasn't the life you wanted..." His gaze never met hers. He ran his thumb over his scar on his palm, the one nearly identical to hers. She thought for a moment, embarrassed and sad. She hadn't meant for him to ever hear that.

"I'm sorry, Jonathan. I didn't... I mean... I don't..." she couldn't find the right words to describe how she felt. "Is this what *you want*?" she

decided on asking.

"Yes," he said it with such conviction that Nancy felt guilt pooling in her stomach. For the first time, he was able to meet her eyes, and she wanted to cry. "I want you, Nancy. And if this is what it takes for me to have you, have a family with you," he placed his hand on her belly, "then I want it more than I have ever wanted New York."

"I don't, I don't want to become my parents..." she whispered meekly. "I don't want you to... to resent me... to resent our baby..." Her emotions got the better of her, and she was crying white hot tears. "I wanted you to have New York... I wanted *us* to have New York. It wasn't supposed to be like this!"

Her hands grabbed onto his shirt, twisting the material in her fists. He wrapped his arms around her, letting her cry. They hadn't talked about this. They had just done as they'd been told by their parents. They were too busy getting things together before their baby came. They hadn't communicated, *really communicated*, until this evening.

Deep down, Jonathan knew she was right. This wasn't the original plan, but he had gone along with it, changed things that needed changing in order to not lose her. He had pushed her to this. He had gotten down, not on one knee but two, begging for her to marry him. Telling her he could make her happy, he could provide for her and the baby. He had sent his portfolio to the newspaper in Indianapolis the day she told him, and he had found the realtor. He had done what he thought was best without asking for her opinion.

"I'm sorry... that I, that I forced this on you... we can, can break the engagement if you want." He slowly began untangling himself from her. If this was what she wanted, he could safely assume he would be sleeping elsewhere.

"No! No!" was her strained reply. Her chest heaved with coughs and hiccups and sobs; her hands practically slapped away her tears. This couldn't be good for the baby. "J-Jonathan, I need you. I need-d you!"

He knew it was ridiculous, but he was feeling anger course its way through him. He couldn't tell if it was with himself or with Nancy. "Then what do you want?" He dropped to his knees in front of her,

hands twitching from his want to touch her, calm her, love her. "I can't keep playing this game. You need to tell me!"

"You!" she all but screamed.

"That wasn't what I asked..."

Nancy sat back, her body trembling with sobs, her mind reeling. "I don't want to break the engagement... If-If this will make, make you happy..."

"Nancy," he finally touched her, his hand cupping her cheek. "I *am* happy."

She melted into his warmth. She wanted to believe him, but she had seen her parents' loveless marriage, and she had heard about his parents' divorce. "We're so young... we're having a baby... Jonathan," she said his name like a plea followed by a sob. He pulled her closer, into his lap, rocking her back and forth. She whispered his name over and over, her fingers clawing at his shirt, searching for something to hold on to.

"Do you want this?" he asked her once more. She pulled away, her cheeks stained and eyes swollen.

"Jonathan," she begged.

"*Do you want this?*" he asked again, more direct.

"I want... I want *you*... isn't that enough?"

"It is, but I want to make sure you're happy."

She thought for a moment. He worried that she would say no, that all of their years together were a mistake. She looked around their room; she thought about their family downstairs; she thought about their very own budding family; she thought about his smile; she thought about all he had gone through for her; she thought about their scars; she thought about their house. It was theirs, no one else's. It was in a suburb, but it was far away from her originally unescapable life. Her eyes once again settled on Jonathan, who waited with baited breath. She could see tears forming in his own eyes, and she wondered how

she would ever have the room in her heart to love her baby as much as she loved this man. She would, though, love her baby as much as him. Because her baby was going to be both of them.

She felt the happy tears begin their flow, and she saw his fall.

"Yes."

He smiled, showered her face with kisses, ran his hands along her belly where their baby was growing. "I want her to have everything we never did," he said, pulling away. Nancy quirked an eyebrow.

"Her?"

Jonathan blushed, a smile forming on his lips. "I, uh, I asked the doctor after your last appointment... I know you wanted to, to wait. I wasn't going to tell you, but I'm just really happy right now..." he trailed, unsure as to what her reaction would be.

More tears brimmed in Nancy's eyes. "We're gonna have a girl?" One hand flew to her stomach, the other to her mouth as her tears streamed down her cheeks. Jonathan nodded, wiping away the tears with the pad of his thumb.

"Yeah, we're gonna have a girl," he confirmed. Nancy jumped forward, grabbed his face in her hands, smashed her smile against his, melted into his touch. Her tears of joy mixed with his, and his lips tasted salty.

"I love you, Jonathan Byers," she murmured into his neck.

"I love you, Nancy Byers," he responded before kissing her again. She giggled. Just like she'd said she needed him, he needed her. He didn't know what he would have done if she had taken his out. Broken off their engagement. He couldn't fathom the idea of not having her in his life.

They pulled apart. Nancy placed her forehead against his, breathing erratically. She loved this man so much. She realized now that she would follow him to the ends of the earth just to ensure they were together. That was why she hadn't told him of her ever-growing fears. That was why she didn't mention her unwillingness to move to a

suburb. He had said how she felt about doing whatever it took for them to be together.

They were soulmates. They were a team. They could do anything as long as they did it together.

3. Chapter 3

AN: Hey all! Hope for all the Americans on here that you all had a great Thanksgiving, and for the non-Americans on here I'm sorry y'all don't have thanksgiving. Ok, so I hope this chapter is less OOC, and that you all enjoy it for the end of the holiday weekend. If you did enjoy this please leave a review which are always appreciated! Happy Holidays! (Also next chapter will have to do with Christmas and stuff while this one deals with a very small bit of Thanksgiving and black friday).

November 1990

The house was cold. They had barely made it home from a Thanksgiving bigger than they'd ever seen before. This was the first Thanksgiving that their families had spent together to merge. There were endless questions about how Nancy was faring, about the baby, did they know the sex (they hadn't told anyone yet; it was their secret), had they picked out a name yet (they hadn't). It was tiresome, being barraged with questions. But the food had been good, and they were able to bring home numerous leftovers.

Jonathan built a fire for Nancy who was situated on the couch covered in blankets and held a mug of hot chocolate close to her chest. She flipped through the channels, settling on the Charlie Brown Thanksgiving special. She patted the spot beside her on the couch, pouting in her way that she reserved for him. He smirked, unable to resist her, placing an arm around her shoulder as he sat beside her.

"Mom was right," Nancy said, laying her head on Jonathan's shoulder. "About needing to pick out a name for the baby. We can't keep calling her the baby, especially since we know she's going to be a girl."

"We've got like three months..." Jonathan trailed, eyes not once leaving Snoopy popping popcorn.

"Exactly, we have *only* three months." He didn't respond, and she huffed beside him. Her hands ran over her stomach, smiling when she felt the pressure of their baby kicking. "What time do you have to

go into work tonight?" she changed the subject.

Jonathan looked at his watch, glanced at the fire then to her face. "Ten? We're going to stand in lines and interview people and stuff." Nancy nodded, relishing in his warmth for as long as possible. It was already nearing nine, and he was going to need to leave in order to get to the headquarters of the *Star*.

"Be safe, ok?" she pleaded. She knew how crazy Black Friday could get, and she didn't want to think about what he would be doing at Circle Centre Mall. He nodded, dropping a kiss on her crown. He was going to say something about always being safe, but she knew firsthand that wasn't true. They had fought a monster from another dimension together, willingly. Nothing was less safe than that.

Sometimes they still had nightmares about it. Nancy more so than Jonathan. She was known to wake up with a start in the middle of the night, muttering about Barb and the Demogorgan. Jonathan thought it had gotten worse since she's been pregnant. He would sometimes wake to hear her screaming, the words always making his blood run cold: "Don't take my baby! Please!" She sounded so helpless, and it cut him to the core. He would wake her, hold her, assure her that he had her, and they would fall back asleep only feeling safe if they were in each other's arms.

He too would have nightmares every once in a while. Mostly flashbacks of them fighting the Demogorgan. Sometimes, he would see Will being taken, or the Mind Flayer leaving his brother's body only to inhibit another person he loved, specifically Nancy. He would shoot up, hearing her agonizing scream in his dream. She was always there, though. Alive and well, shushing him lovingly, placing his head in her lap and calmly brushing her fingers through his hair, placing soft kisses on the tip of his nose.

They weren't free of their demons, not entirely, but they had each other to help them through the night.

That was why Nancy wished he didn't have to work tonight. They had been sleeping in the same bed since their first encounter with the Upside Down back in '83. Not every night, but they had only been able to find comfort when the other was near. Knowing that someone

who had experienced what they had was on call at all times. It had been complicated when she was with Steve, but then Steve wasn't in the picture, and they were free to sleep in the same bed whenever and wherever they liked. Him not being there tonight would probably cause her to have nightmares, and though she normally wouldn't admit it, she was scared.

"When you get home, we can discuss baby names?" she asked, a hopeful expression on her face.

"I probably won't be home until late, or early... maybe not until around eight or nine..." he thought aloud. Nancy nodded solemnly. He was going to be gone for practically the entire night. She began shutting in on herself, thinking about the nightmares she could possibly have without him by her side.

"Oh, yeah, right... That's fine. We'll just discuss it tomorrow..." Nancy tried to conceal her sadness. She had been wanting to talk about this for a while now, and it wasn't that she didn't understand. She did. He was providing for her like he promised he would; she was proud of him, but she couldn't help but feel the slightest bit disappointed. What she didn't understand, though, was why he was avoiding it.

"Yeah, sure. Tomorrow," he affirmed, not sounding all that reassuring to Nancy. She didn't say anything though. She knew he was probably just thinking about his work. Maybe that's why he didn't want to discuss names now. He was distracted taking care of her and the baby. That had to be it, right?

So, Nancy ignored the tugging feeling she felt on her heart. Jonathan would come around in his own time. When he didn't have the Black Friday rush to think about photographing. She was going to just enjoy his company for the time being since he wouldn't be there with her during the night.

"You will be careful though, won't you?" she asked again half an hour later when he was pulling his camera bag over his shoulder. She waited beside the door, holding a pair of gloves and a hat to force him into. She was still coming to terms with the fact that he would be braving the crazed masses.

Jonathan nodded, placed a kiss on Nancy's forehead, grabbed the gloves, and headed out the door. Nancy waited in the foyer until she saw his headlights pull out of their driveway. She sighed as she returned to the dwindling fire. She plopped onto the couch, reaching for her bag. Inside was a baby name book her mother had discretely slipped to her while they were saying their goodbyes. She reached for a pad of paper that was conveniently set on the coffee table from when Mike and El had come up for a long weekend, and the four of them had played many games of Sevens.

She didn't look in the book before scribbling down one name. She stared at the letters, burning them into her mind. Could she do that? Give her child *this* name? The name that haunted her dreams. The name, forever ringing in her ears, that kept her from moving on. The name that had bound her to Steve for too long before she was finally with the one she truly loved. Could she really burden her child with that?

Nancy was only satisfied when she had covered it with enough ink. She could never name her child Barbara. Well, not as a first name.

"What's in a name?" she muttered, running her pen over the ink blob once more for good measure.

She knew that they weren't going to be naming the baby after anyone they knew or had known. She didn't want to give her child something to live up to; she wanted her daughter to live a carefree life with no monsters and no government conspiracies.

Hope, she wrote down. *Joy*, followed suit.

Two names. She was making progress.

Finally, Nancy flipped through the pages of the book her mom had handed her. She jotted down the ones she liked and the ones she thought Jonathan might like. She wanted to take her pen to the ones she didn't like, but refrained as she thought that maybe one day this book would be handed down to El.

"We'll just call you Baby, and when people ask why, we'll tell them that we love *Dirty Dancing*," she joked, poking at her belly. "Yeah, ok,

it wasn't that great of an idea," she said pretending that the lack of movement was because of her suggestion. Nancy checked over her list once more.

-Hope

-Joy

-Cara

-Hilary

-Iris

-Jacquelyn

-Maura

-Beverly

-Sofia

-Nora

-Harper

She believed she had acquired a good set of names, and by the way she was yawning, Nancy decided it was time for her to retreat to her bed. Although, as she took the stairs, she still had an inner sense of dread knowing Jonathan wouldn't be home tonight.

Nancy had always believed herself to be an independent person. Even more so after their ordeal with alternate universes. She had gone off to college without so much as a care in the world, attending Butler to become a pharmacist while Jonathan was off to NYU for photography. She had been fine then. Her nightmares had begun to subside even without Jonathan there, and she thought it was because she was no longer in Hawkins.

Until they came back with a vengeance.

She had screamed so loudly that the RA had called an ambulance in

fear of something horrible. The EMTs had laughed it off, but they didn't know how it had been something worth screaming about. They didn't know the Upside Down. They didn't know the best way to calm her like he did. By the end of the school year, Nancy was in the worst shape she had been in since sophomore year just after Will and Barb had disappeared. She thought she was through with them.

She was on the breaking point, and so close to graduating. So, she had packed her bags, bought a ticket, and was going to New York to see him. They had last seen each other over Christmas break, neither able to return home for that year's spring break. She had shown up at his door, mentally and physically exhausted.

He had taken her into his arms right then and there in the hallway, soothing her. "I've got you. I've got you," he repeated, leading her into his tiny apartment that he could barely afford. She cried, sputtering out bits of sentences about nightmares and Barb and monsters and men in hazmat suits, and he listened, rubbed circle on her back, let her get it all out. She had stayed the weekend, gotten a handle on her nightmares (or had at least figured out better ways to deal with them), but before long, she had to return to Indiana.

That was two weeks before her graduation; one before his. Nancy suppressed a giggle, coming to the realization that *that* weekend was when their baby was conceived. It was hysterical. She had been annoyed with herself, believing their being in-state was the reason she was now "with child." When in actuality, she had gotten pregnant in New York.

"Maybe we should just name you Brooklyn," she laughed while pushing the door to their room open.

The master wasn't right without Jonathan there. This was *their* room. Not just his, not just hers like their parents' homes in Hawkins. They hadn't spent a night apart since buying this house, and it just felt *wrong* without him by her side. It was stupid, only being one night, but she missed him already. Much like their four years apart for college, yet different. She had yearned for him while they were in separate cities, somehow making long distance work. But now, she felt like a piece of her was missing.

Nancy stood before their dresser. His things on the left, hers on the right. She reached down into one of his drawers, grabbed a t-shirt, and pulled it over her head. It smelled like him. This was one of the things she had done all throughout college: stolen his clothes only returning them when they no longer held his scent and taking another one in return. She then stole a pair of his sweatpants, telling herself it was because she couldn't fit into any of her own things now (bullshit considering all the maternity clothes shopping her mother had forced her into).

She slipped under the covers and pulled his pillow to her. She was probably insane, missing him this much only for him to return the following morning. But, he was her comfort in the night. She had seen what happened when they were parted for too long, and she didn't know how she would face her demons and nightmares without him.

She wanted to wait up for as long as possible, but with every passing minute, Nancy's eyes grew heavier and heavier until she was falling into a restless sleep.

XXX

The alarm clock's red numbers were blurred from the tears. They came with shuddering sobs, and Nancy dug her face deeper into Jonathan's pillow. The baby within her was very much awake, stirring as the worst of the nightmares hit. Nancy was constantly remembering the story of El, and how she was taken from her mother. It scared the woman to her core because she had known about the MKUltra program, and the things that Dr. Brenner had done. She knew about the Upside Down. And Jonathan wasn't there to calm her fears. Tell her that no one was going to take their baby away.

She knew that it wasn't true. Baby stealing government officials sounded incredibly ridiculous after they had exposed what had been going on at Hawkins Lab; however, to her subconscious it made perfect sense.

Nancy reached for the phone, halting her movements at the realization that Jonathan wouldn't be anywhere near a phone; and

wouldn't be able to come to her rescue until the biggest story he had ever worked on was finished. Knowing him, he would have come running if she barely even breathed into the receiver, but they needed to money. So, Nancy resisted her urge to call the Indy Star. She hugged the pillow tighter with one hand, the other tracing the roundness of her belly.

"R-raindrops on r-roses, and whiskers on kittens..." she sang the song that her own mother would sing when she was a little girl and had (much less terrifying) nightmares. That had been one of the things that she and Jonathan had come up with when she was going back home after their weekend together. *The Sound of Music* was one of her favorite movies, only second to *The Princess Bride*, and when she was plagued by nightmares, she played the tape.

Nancy threw her legs over the side of her bed when she remembered the VHS that she had brought when they moved in. "I ha-ave confidence in, in sunshine..." she muttered as she descended the stairs to the living room. Nancy was now able to read the numbers on the hall clock; she had slept for four hours. More than she had ever imagined in the first place. Surely, by the end of the movie, it would be nearing 7:30, and Jonathan would have to be on his way home at that point.

It was moments like these that Nancy wished she could drink coffee. As she sat in front of the TV at 4:30, "The Sound of Music Overture" blaring at her after a frightful night's sleep. She could really use the coffee.

She sang every word to every song. Feeling better as the movie progressed. Nancy chalked it up to the hormones causing her to blubber when Maria reunited with the family and again during Captain von Trapp and Maria's wedding and one final time as the family made their way over the Alps.

"Climb every mountain," she hummed as the screen faded to black, and she headed to the kitchen to make breakfast.

It was odd, this surge of energy, but Nancy welcomed it. While her nightmares normally left her drained, tonight (or this morning) had been less exhausting and easier than anticipated. Nancy placed an

Eggo waffle in the toaster and grabbed her list while she waited for it to pop back up.

Nancy was startled, not by the toaster, but by the door from the garage opening. In came Jonathan, weary from the night's work. He smiled when he caught sight of her at the kitchen table, and he was quick to head to the coffee pot.

"Didn't 'spect to see you up this early," his words were almost garbled from the mug in front of his face. Nancy nodded, an unpleasantly forced smile on her lips as she debated with what to tell him about the previous night. "Y'okay?" he asked, noticing her odd expression.

"Y-yeah, I'm fine... just had a bit of a nightmare. But I'm, I'm fine," she spoke while she reached for her waffle that had finally popped from the toaster. "I slept for about four hours, so, I mean... not bad... I watched *The Sound of Music* after that, so..." Nancy didn't know why the conversation was stilted. He knew of her nightmares, and she his; yet she wanted to clam up while talking to him about it. Maybe because she knew he would try to fix it; would speak of never taking any more pieces that would take him away from home at night. Nancy didn't want him to do that for her.

"Oh, I didn't realize it would be that hard on you." He placed the coffee cup on the table, taking the seat beside her.

"No, no. I was, I was fine... I, uh, I made a list. Of baby names," she quickly changed the subject from her night terrors which Jonathan obviously wanted to continue talking about.

"That's good, but, uh, what were the nightmares about?"

"Can we just drop the nightmares?" she responded hotly.

Jonathan sighed. "We *can*, but it's a matter of if we *should*." Nancy averted her eyes. "Nance, you've been talking, well more like yelling, in your sleep. Has it gotten, gotten worse?"

Nancy rolled her eyes, not wanting to talk about this at the moment, yet knowing it was inevitable. "It's not *worse*, just more frequent. And it's not like the Demogorgan and the Mind Flayer and the Demodogs

and the gate and Barb. It's-It's Dr. Brenner, and he's tak-taking the baby because we, we know the truth. It's *stupid*."

She watched him now. He pulled his fist in front of his mouth, and his chest rose with another sigh. "It's fucked up," she told him when he didn't respond. "I mean, I thought that they'd stop when we got away from Hawkins. How are we supposed to be parents when we're looking around every corner fearing for our lives, and even as adults we can't get over shitty nightmares. It's fucked up."

"MKUltra isn't a thing anymore. They're gone; we made sure of it. They can't possibly take the baby away from us," Jonathan reasoned. Nancy knew this. She knew the bad men were gone. Six, seven years this month.

"I *know*. I'm just paranoid. Honestly, it's nothing. Plus, it says in some baby books that dreams and nightmares get more vivid, so once the baby's born it should go back to normal."

"Ok, so you mean like the normal number of nightmares you were having before you were pregnant," he sounded to be mocking her.

"Yes," she said.

Jonathan let out a puff of air that bordered a laugh or chuckle, "You're right. It is fucked up."

"But there's nothing we can do about it. Besides, well, seeing a shrink, and they'd lock us up for good, so that's out of the question. Look, just don't worry about it. And can we *please* talk about baby names. I hate that we know that she's a she, and keep referring to her as 'the baby.'"

"Pushy," he joked; Nancy swatted him. "Alright, what'd'ya got?" He motioned to the list she'd created. He skimmed it for a moment, imagining what their child would be like, imagining her with each name. "I like Nora."

"You barely looked at it!" she exclaimed. "How do I know you didn't just choose that one to get me off your back?"

"Hey," he held his hands up, "I genuinely like that one. I take pride in

names."

"Yeah, I guess you would considering you have one of the, like, most common names ever."

"Not that you've got room to talk. Your name's a phrase people use when someone's being a jerk or a teenaged sleuth." She giggled at his response.

"So, you *really* like Nora?" she asked once more.

Jonathan nodded. "I *really* like Nora. Now, can we go to sleep? I'm beat."

Nancy smiled, easily molding into the crook of his arm while he led her up the stairs.

4. Chapter 4

December 1990

Their house didn't have a lot of lights for Christmas. Completely understandable since his mother had gone batshit crazy on using Christmas lights when Will had gone missing those seven years ago. They had lights on their Christmas tree (boring white ones) and that was all. Not like they were going to be using their tree. Both of their mothers had persuaded them to return to Hawkins and spend the holidays with them.

So, they packed some bags the night before Christmas Eve along with some bags full of presents for their siblings, heading down to Hawkins for the holiday. With Steve.

Steve had moved into the city after going to IU. He had played basketball and was on the NCAA winning team in '87. He was currently teaching at a school in the city, deciding that he was really good with kids and could make something out of it. All his students loved him, and so did all the kids who played on his basketball team. No one could have seen it coming that *Steve Harrington* would be teaching Social Studies at a high school, but he was, and they couldn't be prouder.

The car ride was awkward. Whenever Nancy or Jonathan tried to start up a conversation, Steve was in his own little world, not paying attention. They didn't take offence and continued on with their own conversations. Every once in a while, Steve would chime in with a tidbit here or an anecdote there, but he was still distracted even when willingly participating.

He all but ran from the car when they pulled in front of the Wheeler home. Nancy, although tired, refused to leave the situation be and followed Steve to the basement that her brother and his friends were occupying. There were cheers when the man made his appearance, so Nancy kept herself in the dark, not wanting to interrupt or draw attention to herself.

Her brother and his party were all gathered around the card table

they used to play Dungeons and Dragons on, the two couples in the group still paired together after so many years. El was sitting in Mike's lap, and Lucas was as close to Max as he could be without sharing a chair. Dustin pulled up a seat for Steve, and Will waited patiently for the festivities to continue. Nancy wasn't sure how long it would take for them to pick Steve's brain to learn the secret he was harboring, so she slowly and silently lowered herself to one of the top stairs.

Mike continued reading the campaign he had written earlier that week, but he didn't get far with the mood shifting with Steve's contemplation.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Dustin asked, slapping Steve's shoulder slightly. The older man jumped, startled from the touch. He hadn't actually heard what his younger friend had said.

"Yeah, you're kinda ruining the fun," Max told him, a smirk plastered to her face.

"Nothing's wrong, just keep playing your game," Steve ground out, his tone angrier than it had ever been with the party.

"Oh, bullshit," El said, grabbing everyone's attention. Even at nineteen, she wasn't one for many words, and she never cursed. She preferred to observe, only occasionally giving her opinion on a subject, and she wasn't one to start things. "Something's bothering you, come on tell us!"

Nancy held bated breath, wondering if the quiet girl would be Steve's undoing. She hoped so. His expression softened; these kids cared about him, and he them. The woman on the stairs knew he would open up to them if he didn't to her.

"Fine," he consented. "But if you little shits go tell anyone else what's going on you're all gonna have an ass kicking tomorrow." He may have sounded harsh, but the kids knew it was all in good natured.

Steve ran a hand through his hair, composing himself just enough. "I, ugh," he muttered. "I have... I have a kid."

The party went silent. Nancy covered her mouth with her hand, holding back a gasp. Steve sighed, running his hand through his hair again and then down over his face. "Just found out yesterday. Uh, you guys remember that girl I dated for a few months last winter kinda into the spring? Yep..." he said when they nodded. "So, uh, yeah. I went to go, you know, see her yesterday too. Name's Madison. And I... I'm taking her home the day after Christmas 'cause, 'cause well... her mom... doesn't, you know, exactly want her. And, um, I do? I mean, I do... she's the cutest baby I've ever seen, and I know, I know that's not all parenting's about, but..."

Nancy couldn't believe her ears, and from the shocked looks on the party's faces, neither could they. Steve Harrington was a father. He was thrown the same lot she was. But he had always been content to live out a life like his parents' (without the whole crappy dad part). It didn't surprise Nancy that Steve wanted to have a family of his own and possibly live in a suburb (he probably would need to, Indy wasn't exactly a place for a baby), but she hadn't expected it for him so soon. And from the looks of it, he would be going at it alone. At least she had Jonathan. Steve had nobody.

The basement fell into an awkward silence. No one dared to say anything. The silence was broken when the basement door was pulled open, and Karen Wheeler stood at the head of the stairs.

"Kids, it's time to—Nancy? What are you doing sitting on the stairs? You should be relaxing!" Nancy frowned as the party and Steve stared at her after her mother blew her cover. She waved awkwardly, sending Steve a solemn look. He shook his head in disbelief, rushing past her on the stairs.

In the kitchen, all eyes were on Nancy and the kids when they returned. Nancy caught Jonathan's gaze; he nodded to the front door that Steve had skillfully slipped out from. While the party remained in the kitchen, snagging a few appetizers, Nancy headed to the front door, waving her hand when Jonathan rose to follow her. This was something she felt she had to talk with Steve alone.

She pulled on her coat before grabbing her friend's hanging one. She tentatively opened the door to find Steve pacing on her parents' front lawn.

"Steve!" she called, holding his coat to him. His mouth still formed a grimace, but his eyes thanked her. "Was, uh, was that the reason that you were kinda distracted on the drive up?"

"Now what makes you think that?" was his sarcastic response. Nancy rolled her eyes; she deserved a sarcastic response. Steve shook his head, placing his hand on his jaw. "I'm sorry, Nance, I don't have any reason to snap at you..."

"No, Steve, you're right. You've got a lot to think about here. And I mean, you're gonna be doing it on your own?" Nancy paused, hesitating before asking, "If you, if you don't mind my asking, um, why didn't she... you know?" she avoided the word like it was the plague.

Steve almost shot back 'why didn't you?' but decided it was best not to. "She, uh, she thought that was what she wanted. She thought she could do it on her own, and by the time she realized she didn't, it was too late. And she said that if I, you know, wanted her then, well, I could have her. And I did, I do... I mean come on, I'm here, and I know about her. There's no reason for her to be put up for adoption when I want her, and I lo... I love her. She's my daughter. You feel the same thing for your kid, right?"

Nancy nodded. For all that she hadn't wanted for her life, this baby she was carrying no longer was in that category. "But, Steve, you're all alone. At least I've got Jonathan, and we're figuring it out together. We've been preparing for months! And you just find out yesterday that you're going to be a single dad the day after Christmas—what are you going to do about work? You're going to have to take time off. And is Indy really a good place for a kid to grow up. You work in those schools, you see what goes on there every day."

"Nancy, if you're trying to tell me I shouldn't do this, well, it's not your business." His response was cooler than he'd intended.

"I'm not saying you shouldn't do this. I'm saying it's not going to be easy. I think that I know more than anyone that you'll be a great father, Steve Harrington. And all those college kids in that basement will 100% back me up on that. I just hope you're ready," she finished uneasily. Nancy didn't know if she came across as she'd planned, or if

she still seemed like a nosy ex-girlfriend meddling into his life.

"I am ready. I wasn't going to tell you about it until after I'd sorted everything through. So, you knowing and then giving me this whole spiel was not how I wanted Christmas to be spent. But thanks. And you and Jonathan are going to be great parents too." He stiffly hugged her side.

Nancy giggled, and Steve stared at her quizzically. "Your kid's gonna have really great hair," she mused, tugging at his abnormally long locks.

"Yeah, and yours is gonna have really good cheek bones," he said as they began walking back towards the house. "Hey, do you wanna see some pictures. I got some really cute Polaroids of Maddie."

"I'd love to see them," she smiled at how excited he was to finally be able to talk about his child. Steve was happier than she'd seen him in a long time. From the exuberance from her friend, and the anticipation of her own baby girl and pending marriage, Nancy had to say this was definitely the best Christmas yet.

AN: So I'm leaving my AN at the end so that I don't spoil anything... I hope y'all liked it! I wanted Steve to have a kid around the same age as Nancy and Jonathon's daughter, and this came to me. I wasn't sure how it would work, but I think Steve would totally step up to the plate and do what he had to do. And how can we not have Steve with a baby or kid? It just seems like he's destined to be a parent after the last season! So, I made him one. I also wanted to show him some love, and hopefully in the next few chapters I can bring in some of the other characters as well... Happy Holidays, please leave a review if you enjoyed! Thanks for reading!